

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 841

By Todd

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Representative Joe Kent of Memphis.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of our friend and former colleague, Joe Kent of Memphis; and

WHEREAS, Joe Kent was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, Representative Joe Kent served with distinction for twenty-six years as Representative of the 96th and 83rd House Districts in Memphis, during the 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th, 101st, 102nd, and 103rd General Assemblies from 1978 to 2004, serving his constituents with dedication, diligence and probity; and

WHEREAS, born January 22, 1938 in Vicksburg, Mississippi, the son of James M. and Dorothy Roberson Joslin, Joe Kent attended primary and secondary schools in Sardis, Panola County, Mississippi; he attended Northwest Mississippi Junior College from 1958-59 and Memphis State University, now the University of Memphis, from 1960-61; and

WHEREAS, Representative Kent served in the National Guard from 1959 until 1964, when he was honorably discharged; in 1961 he embarked upon a career in law enforcement with the Memphis Police Department, from which he retired as a Lieutenant in 1986; and

WHEREAS, an exemplary police officer, Joe Kent was specially selected in 1968 to guard James Earl Ray for thirty days and prevent his escape during the tumultuous civil unrest and rioting that broke out in Memphis following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr; and

WHEREAS, first elected to the Tennessee General Assembly in 1978, Joe Kent represented a constituency in East Memphis and Germantown; in 1995 he played an integral

role in the passage of the most comprehensive anti-crime package ever written into law to address Tennessee's rising crime rate; he also sponsored measures to provide for seizure of the vehicles of repeat drunk drivers and assisted in the passage of the State's welfare-to-work program, Families First; and

WHEREAS, a moderate who often served as a bridge between his fellow Republicans and the Democratic members of the House of Representatives, Joe Kent enjoyed the respect and admiration of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle and was proudest of his work on education and crime victims' compensation legislation; and

WHEREAS, during his long tenure in the General Assembly, Representative Kent served astutely on the House standing committees on Finance Ways and Means, State and Local Government, Calendar and Rules, and Ethics; he also served on the Council on Pensions and Insurance, as Vice Chair of the Local Government Subcommittee and was a key member of the House Subcommittees on State Government and Budget; and

WHEREAS, Joe Kent served with distinction as the President of the Memphis Police Association from 1975 to 1977 and was the producer and host of "*Joe Kent Presents Crime and You*," a weekly Memphis crime prevention television program from 1985-88; and

WHEREAS, while serving in the General Assembly, Joe Kent was appointed to the Police Officers Standard Training (POST) Commission, in which position he worked to help law enforcement officers receive additional training to enhance their ability to meet the safety needs of Tennessee's communities; and

WHEREAS, retiring from the Tennessee General Assembly in 2004, Mr. Kent was employed by Farris Matthews as a lobbyist, representing his clients with acumen and alacrity on important issues and legislation in Nashville; and

WHEREAS, a member of the Leadership Memphis Class of 1984, Joe Kent was an active and important part of the Memphis community; he was a charter member of the Brooks Gallery Decorative Arts Trust, a member of the Memphis Kidney Foundation, and former member of the Board of Directors of the Memphis Epilepsy Foundation; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, he was a recipient of the National Kidney Foundation's Distinguished Service Award and was selected by the American Council of Young Political Leaders to visit the Soviet Union in 1978; and

WHEREAS, preceded in death by his parents, Dorothy and James Joslin, Representative Kent is survived by his beloved wife, Becky Hedrick Kent, his devoted sons Joseph Bryson and Kevin Michael, and his treasured granddaughter Melanie; and

WHEREAS, a warm, charming and affable gentleman with a keen wit and love of life, Joe Kent will be mourned by all those fortunate to have known him and especially by the members of this body, both past and present, and the vast numbers of legislative employees, state officials, lobbyists, and state employees who had the great privilege to call him their friend; and

WHEREAS, Joe Kent leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of former Representative Joe Kent, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Joe Kent.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.